POTOMAC YARD FIRE STATION AND AFFORDABLE HOUSING TASK FORCE

Responses to Questions August 22, 2006

1. What is the nature of the agreement that led the developer to fund the project? I presume this is a quid pro quo, what did the City exchange?

Answer: There has not been any agreement between the City and the Developer. The Developer has made a proposal to the City to resolve the identified problem of fire department access to Land Bay H of Potomac Yard, which became an issue during the staff's review of the developer's detailed plans for block H submitted to the city in 2005. That proposal has had its technical merits evaluated by a multiagency team of City Staff who concluded that it resolved the fire access problem and that from a staff perspective it offered other positive benefits to the City. At that time the briefing process began to introduce the idea to the community. There is not an "agreement." If this proposal is agreed to, it will represent an alternative solution to the aforementioned fire department access in Block H.

2. It was mentioned that the cost of the 4th bay at the Potomac Yard Station is a cost to the City and is not budgeted (approximately ¾ to 1 million dollars). How much of the rest of this project will likely end up being unbudgeted City expense and if this plan has been in existence since 1999 (?); how come these costs are unbudgeted and where does the City expect to recover the funds?

Answer: This project (Potomac Yard) is a private developer project. There was no proposal to add a fire station to Potomac Yard when the plan was approved in 1999. When the developer proposed an alternative design to resolve fire department access the design included a turnkey station, including all interior furnishings and three bays. The City would prefer a 4 bay station, to meet future needs of the fire department. If the City accepts the proposed alternative, then a three bay station would be built unless the City chooses to fund the cost difference between a three and four bay station. The rest of the costs of the development are expected to be borne by the developer with the exception of pedestrian access to the Monroe Street Bridge.

A fire station was not budgeted in 1999, since the then Fire Chief determined an additional station was not required for Potomac Yard at that time. This opportunity became available in 2006, when detailed plans submitted by the developer for Block H did not provide sufficient fire access. The reason for this was the buildings at the street curbs were designed in a way that fire trucks could now readily turn from street to street.

3. An August 9th Washington Post article on the proposed Potomac Yard project stated that 7 years after the plan for the project was approved, the developer and the city discovered "a major design flaw." It appears the proposed streets are too narrow, and, in an emergency, fire trucks would actually whack into the sides of luxury town homes that you have designed to sit near the curb. The Post article goes on to say that there are other solutions to this problem besides taking Del Ray's fire fighting equipment--widening the streets, for example, or downsizing the townhouses; since this is a Potomac Yard development error, are you open to considering these alternate solutions?

Answer: The width of the streets is not the issue and this is not the reason for the proposed fire station. The issue relates to the turning movements of the fire department apparatus, the radius of curb and gutter at intersections, and the placement of buildings relative to the street in the detailed plan for Block H submitted in 2005.

There are several ways to resolve the fire department access issue. It is up to the Developer to design the solution. The current fire station proposal is one way to solve the issue. Staff believes that this is a positive, technical solution, but not the only potential solution to the fire station access issue.

4. Does anyone have information in regards to the streets being too narrow?

Answer: Staff has not said that the roads are too narrow. Rather, this relates to the turning movements of fire department apparatus, the radius of curb and gutter at intersections, and the placement of buildings relative to the street in the detailed plan for Block H submitted in 2005.

5. On July 25th the question was asked of City Staff both Planning and Code about the street widths, particularly as it relates to the new Ordinance to Amend Title 4, Chapter 2 of the City Code to Adopt Changes to the Virginia Statewide Fire Prevention Code: Reference Sections A106 - Emergency Vehicle Access; A107 – Emergency Vehicle Easement; Figure A106.1 Minimum Standards For Emergency Vehicles Access to Private Streets and Alleys.

How did we get from "the streets and alleys are to code" to "the streets and alleys are too narrow" and by the way the streets are wider in Potomac Yard than they are in Del Ray, Warwick Village, Lynhaven etc...?

Answer: This is not a width issue. The proposed streets are the appropriate width. The issues noted above are radius of curb and gutters at intersections and the placement of buildings relative to the street. Additionally new developments are evaluated against current design standards while older communities are not required to meet those standards as a matter of fairness and equity.

6. Art Dahlberg discussed the issue of the narrow streets last night in response to the question about what prompted the developer to offer the fire station. Art described the multi-stage planning process that resulted in the developer proposing a plan with one less through street (Potomac and Main are in the plan) and a layout that made the streets narrower for turning than desired. While the issue of "smaller fire trucks" keeps coming up, rest assured that modern design of fire trucks, along with professional operators, would provide smooth response throughout the yard in the proposed plan.

The narrow streets and the design of the new fire station will definitely change response times. Has this been taken into consideration when developing fire suppression routes and data tables for response times?

Answer: It is not certain that the streets and the design of the new fire station will definitely change response times. If the plan to build station 209 moves forward, all the fire zone response areas will be updated to deliver the closest units to an emergency call. These areas and the fire units designated to respond to them are updated any time a new station or unit is added in Alexandria or in our neighboring jurisdictions.

7. If the city finds that the current Engine 202 is smaller than the desired size due to the constraints of the physical building, how small of a fire Engine will Station 209 need to service their area due to the narrow roads? How will that help to fit into the larger regional response? Should we be also considering the closest fire stations at the Airport and Arlington both present and planned before we proceed with moving the fire suppression unit?

Answer: The size of the fire engine at station 202 is not governed by the width of the streets, but by the size of the apparatus bays in the station. With the new station, full size apparatus could be purchased in the future that will service both Potomac Yard and Del Ray.

With the current automatic mutual aid agreements with other jurisdictions, the closest units available will always be called regardless if they are located in Alexandria. This ensures that the highest level of service delivery is met regardless of jurisdictional boundaries. However, we plan first for a response by an Alexandria unit when planning for fire/EMS response.

8. Should we look at building the Station 209 at the opposite side of Land bay G or even Land bay F and then equipping and staffing the facility jointly with Arlington County? I believe the Fire Chief Schwartz stated that the Crystal City was his highest calls for service, and the Potomac Yard and Arlandria area is the highest area for calls for service from Station 202. By cost sharing the Station 209 both Fire and EMS services should be available to both jurisdiction on day one and since Capital Funds are the hardest to come by, it is the most fiscally responsible question to ask?

Answer: Arlington County's Capital Improvement Program does not include the second, new Crystal City fire station as being in the top tier of its priorities. Therefore, any serious consideration for such a facility is a number of years away and while there may be a need, for an Arlington fire station in Crystal City, several other Arlington capital projects have been given a higher priority. Joint staffing would be difficult since Arlington firefighters must deliver the majority of their work to Arlington, as would Alexandria firefighters to the City of Alexandria.

9. From the current station, how often is the fire suppression unit the first unit on the scene for non-fire personal safety calls? I am concerned that we may be missing something here, if fire trucks are often the first responding unit to serious injury and illness then solely keeping the Adv. Life Support at #202 may not provide the protection we currently have.

Answer: Fire suppression units arrive first on the scene approximately one third of the time. (See chart for historical detail.) The time lapse between arriving units is not captured within this data. For example, if both an engine and a medic unit are dispatched and leave from quarters simultaneously, they will arrive at the incident within seconds of one another. However, the first unit to report will be recorded as first on the scene. There will always be a variety of units responding depending upon which stations and units are available. We expect no change in response time for EMS calls.

10. What portion of the taxes that I pay go for fire protection?

Answer: Fire and EMS services are 5.8% of the General Fund, or\$28.7 million in FY2007.

11. If the fire suppression stays at Windsor station, will the project still go through?

Answer: It is not likely that the city will fund two fire suppression operations in such close proximity with so many other competing priorities.

- A. If yes, where will the funds to operate the Potomac Yard fires station come from?
- B. If no, will a fire station and an equal amount of affordable/workforce housing be provided in the Yard?

Answer: If the Fire Station/Affordable Housing project is not built as proposed by the Developer, the City and the Developer will continue to look for other opportunities for production of affordable and workforce housing units, including a substantial multiunit project. Based on the planned development of the overall site, the Developer has already committed to a voluntary housing affordable housing contribution of \$10.5 million and is working with the City as it explores ways to leverage this contribution to achieve the maximum number of units possible commensurate with the value of the Developer's anticipated contribution.

12. What will be the difference in cost to the City between the current proposal and the cost of building a fire station elsewhere? (Also, See Response to Question #15)

Answer: It's hard to say what the cost to the City would be...the City hopes to leverage other (non-City subsidized) funding sources. The size and character of the Fire Station project allows the City to efficiently leverage a large amount of equity through the low-income housing tax credit program, but this resource might not be available elsewhere.

13. What will be the difference in cost to the City of the same number of affordable/workforce housing in the Yard?

Answer: It is hard to say what additional costs may be involved if the multi-family project proposed to be located above the Fire Station is built elsewhere in Potomac Yard since the land cost associated with such a development at another parcel is unknown at this time, as are the various financing options that might be leveraged for such a project.

The mixed use Fire Station project allows some flexibility in how the inherent land cost is characterized in a low income housing tax credit application which allows for a greater leverage of the Developer's affordable housing contribution associated with this project. It is unknown if this same leverage could be achieved at a different site.

14. If the project is killed, what would be the difference in cost to the City between the current proposal and the cost to the City of building (1) the fire station elsewhere and (2) the affordable/workforce housing elsewhere, both in the Yard.

Answer: The City would have to acquire the land to build the station, at approximately \$1 to \$2 million. A three bay station is \$6 to \$7 million. The city has not budgeted monies for this capital project. Adding a fourth bay would add another \$750,000 to the project. (These are estimates only)

15. Can both stations provide fire suppression support? Fore example, can a smaller truck remain at #202 and the larger units move to #209?

Answer: Station #209 will be the largest facility to date in the city. All equipment is planned to move to this station. The current fiscal budget does not provide enough funds to support fire suppression staff in both facilities.

16. Can the city afford NOT to hire additional staffing to provide fire suppression at both #202 and #209?

Answer: The cost of maintaining fire suppression personnel at both locations is approximately \$1,194,110 annually.

17. During rush hour time and with no areas for vehicles able to move to the side of the road to allow the passing of emergency vehicles, how will this affect response times?

Answer: The citywide goal is to maintain a four-minute response time. Personnel will find the best routes and roads to take at all times of day. For example, units would not necessarily need to use Route 1 for access.

18. During the negotiation process between the city and the developer, who authorized the move of fire suppression?

Answer: *There has been no authorization to date. This is just a proposal.*

19. Handouts were provided to attendees upon arrival, some slides have the phrase; "Suppression Other,' what does this mean?

Answer: "Suppression Other" refers to incidents such as alarm bells, false alarms, smell of smoke without a known fire, or even someone stuck inside an elevator.

20. Has a study been done with parking to consider redoing some of the parking options on the smaller streets in Del Ray due to equipment?

Answer: No study is needed. The Fire Department is able to respond to Del Ray with its current equipment.

21. If fire suppression is moved from #202 to #209, with the width of some streets within Del Ray, will new and larger trucks be able to make it down the streets?

Answer: The size of engine pumpers and the width of the streets have no correlation. The engine assigned to station 202 on Windsor Avenue is smaller than other engine pumpers throughout the city, due to the size of the station, not the width of the streets. All trucks and engines are capable of accommodating any neighborhood or community, as they are relatively the same width. Apparatus trends are increasing in length and height, not width.

22. If station #209 does not get built, will Potomac Yard have sufficient fire suppression support?

Answer: Yes.

23. It appears as though money decisions will need to be made; when will the citizens of Del Ray and the surrounding areas have an opportunity to voice their concerns and assist with the determination that additional funds are required for new hires?

Answer: If such a decision is needed, there is ample opportunity for public discussion at the scheduled Planning Commission and City Council meetings.

24. What is the expected change in response time when fire suppression is moved from station 202 to 209?

Answer: This depends on the location in question and its distance from available fire units.

25. What is the projected revenue that the city anticipates to receive from the development of Potomac Yard?

Answer: *Staff is currently working on this.*

26. Who is responsible to inform the various Citizen Associations the outcome of meetings and what approvals/disapprovals are made?

Answer: The Potomac Yard Fire Station and Affordable Housing Task Force has been established to provide information to Alexandria residents, receive feedback, and make a recommendation to City Council. The Task Force, with the assistance of City staff will inform residents of the outcome of these proceedings.

27. With the anticipated population growth expected for Potomac Yard, will they require a fire station of their own?

Answer: The Fire Department determines service according, but not limited, to population density, flow rate, and construction. Trends in response times are constantly monitored and changes and/or additions are made as necessary. The forecasted population does not warrant an added fire station.

28. Regarding the mutual assistance pact between the municipalities, how are the costs shared? Is one jurisdiction compensated for responding to another jurisdiction, or are the costs waived?

Answer: There is no cost sharing. Each jurisdiction absorbs its costs.

29. Can funding from Homeland Defense be used to purchase equipment or provide funding for additional staff?

Answer: Homeland Security grants have allowed the Fire Department to purchase equipment that is currently stored outside at Station 202, on Windsor Avenue. If station 209 is built, it will contain the necessary space to house this equipment indoors. Personnel costs may not be billed to Homeland Security grants and it is unlikely that additional equipment could be obtained with Homeland Security funds.

30. Has there been a time that engines have been dispatched and another fire call comes in? What happens in this situation?

Answer: The next due and/or closest unit will respond. This may be an Alexandria unit or a unit from another jurisdiction.

31. In the design for Potomac Yard, will Potomac Avenue and Main Street connect to Arlington?

Answer: The Monroe Street Bridge is being straightened; two additional north/south connections will be added, Potomac Avenue and Main Street. Potomac Avenue will run behind the shopping center and cross Four Mile Run. Main Street will be aligned in front of the Target shopping center.

- 32. Is it necessary or is there a way the decision process can be separated into sections, one for fire suppression and one for affordable housing?
- 33. What is the Developer required to deliver in the construction of the new fire station?

Answer: A fully operational fire station.

34. What is the future public safety needs for the Route 1 corridor and surrounding communities; Lynhaven, Hume Springs, and Warwick Village?

Answer: All of these communities are addressed when the Fire Department assesses response times. There are no expected large increases in population.

35. What types of noise mitigation procedures have been considered when fire engines depart the new station in regards to the affordable housing?

Answer: New technologies exist that will limit or isolate the building vibration and station apparatus noise. Examples include triple paned windows, bi-fold, rather than overhead bay doors, and quality insulation. These concerns are already being addressed and will continue with comprehensive sound studies involving qualified sound engineers.

36. When was the last time the City built a new fire station?

Answer: 1976

37. Will housing Hazardous Materials and equipment at station 209 provide a longer shelf life for materials and equipment than in sea containers at station 202?

Answer: HazMat equipment is often heat sensitive, storing outdoors may decrease its life by up to 50%.

38. With all the new development in Potomac Yard, will there be sufficient fire suppression to cover all needs?

Answer: Yes.

39. With moving the fire suppression unit from 202 to 209, who stands to gain the most advantage in response time?

Answer: *No one area gains significantly.*

40. With the anticipated move of fire suppression from 202, how will this affect insurance rates?

Answer: Insurance rate determinations are not based on the age of homes or the distance from a fire station. Each city is assigned an ISO class rating, the City of Alexandria has a rating of three and will not change based on the location of the facility or resources.

41. From the current station, how often is the fire suppression engine the first unit on the scene for a non-fire, personal safety call?

Answer: In the area serviced by station 202, Windsor Avenue, fire suppression engines arrive on scene first approximately 33% of the time. Each responding unit on an incident will push a button inside the apparatus to indicate its arrival. If an engine and a medic unit are both dispatched and leave quarters at the same time, but the engine arrives seconds ahead of the medic unit, it will be documented as the engine arriving first on the scene while essentially they arrive simultaneously. This is a common occurrence, as the engine will generally lead the medic unit in responses.

42. How is it decided what and how much fire suppression is provided for an incident?

Answer: This is based on established protocols for the amount and type of resources dispatched to various types of incidents. Please see attachment.

43. How many EMS calls were made for calendar year 2005 and 2006 to Warwick Village and the location of each call?

Answer: Please see attachment.

44. How many fire suppression calls were made for calendar year 2005 and 2006 to Warwick Village and the location of each call?

Answer: Please see attachment.

45. How many times were fire suppression vehicles dispatched to Warwick Village under the "Suppression Other" category?

Answer: *Not yet available.*

46. What are the current entry points and routes into Warwick Village areas when responding to fire suppression calls?

Answer: From station 202 it is Windsor to Mount Vernon to Kennedy/Landover, from station 209 it is Glebe to Mount Vernon to Kennedy to Landover.

47. What are the current statistics of EMS response times to a Warwick Village resident for calendar year 2005 and 2006?

Answer: *Not yet available.*

48. What are the current statistics of fire suppression response times to a Warwick Village resident for calendar year 2005 and 2006?

Answer: *Not yet available.*

49. Will the change in response times meaningfully impact community safety (Del Ray and the greater city)?

Answer: No.

50. How long is it reasonable for us to assume the city can keep the Windsor station operating at a reasonable capacity and cost given its size and age?

Answer: *Indefinitely, the station will be renovated.*

51. Is the staffing at one station (no matter where it is located) enough to handle the needs of Potomac Yard and Potomac West? How do we quantify that? What is the reasonable assumption for staffing levels in the future?

Answer: Staffing levels will be predicated on service demands and it appears that any future increase will most likely be in EMS.

52. Given that Windsor does not connect to Potomac Yard, what impact would that have on response time from the Windsor station to Potomac Yard?

Answer: We don't typically use Windsor Avenue to Route 1 because of poor sight distance at the intersection and the lack of a traffic signal. Our usual response trip would be Windsor to Dewitt to Custis to Route 1. Custis will be a connecting street to Potomac Yard.

53. How does Arlington's fire prevention plans for Crystal City play into this?

Answer: (Also, see response to question #9) The Arlington Fire Department proposed new Crystal City fire station is not in the county Capital Improvement Program at this time.

54. If #209 is not built, what happens to the affordable housing that is planned to be built on top of the station?

Answer: If the Fire Station is not built as proposed, the Developer (Potomac Yard Development, LLC) and the City will continue to explore opportunities to provide on-site affordable housing at Potomac Yard, including a multifamily project that would contain a substantial number of affordable units as well as smaller, scattered sites or units among the various housing types planned in different Land Bays commensurate with the value of the Developer's overall voluntary affordable housing contribution for the site. If there is no Fire Station, the multifamily project might be located elsewhere within the Yard. Depending on where the multifamily housing is located and the type of financing tools available, the City may be able to leverage some of the land cost which would otherwise comprise a significant portion of the value of the Developer's overall contribution.

55. What is the anticipated population growth for the new Potomac Yard residential area? Answer: An initial breakdown of anticipated population growth was received from current zoning and planning guidelines.

For the city of Alexandria for the year of 2005 population was estimated at 135,856. By 2010 population is expected to rise to 143,903; by 2015 149,421.

The projected population growth for response area for fire station 202/209 for 2005 was 27,775. The estimated growth by 2010 is 28,849 and 2015 is at 30,473.

56. What are the different scenarios being considered to determine if the affordable housing will be rental units, condominiums, or a combination of both?

Answer: Housing staff has modeled the project to determine the economic feasibility of different scenarios. Initial pro formas indicate that the following types of projects are possible: mixed income rental, to include affordable housing and workforce units; mixed income rental, to include affordable, workforce and market rate units; and mixed income condo "for-sale" units (in this case, proceeds from sales of market rate condos would help subsidize the purchase price of some units to provide affordable homeownership opportunities). Please note that the rental scenarios being modeled are based on funding which includes use of the low-income housing tax credit program. Until project costs are determined, the exact number of each type of unit cannot be finalized. While it may be possible to have some units as for-sale condominiums, and others as rentals, with only 60 units in all, this is likely to be an inefficient way to finance and operate such a small project.

57. What is a "Low Income Housing Tax Credit" and who benefits from this, the City of the Developer?

Answer: Low Income Housing Tax Credits are a mechanism, created by the federal government in 1986, to attract private investment to affordable housing development by providing tax credits equal to the amount of certain development costs to investors with tax liabilities who purchase the credits, providing equity. Through a project's use of tax credit funding, the City benefits to the extent that investor equity allows the City to leverage the value of the Developer's voluntary affordable housing contribution even further to achieve the maximum number of units. There is no tangible financial impact (positive or negative) to the Developer (Potomac Yard, LLC). Since the City will likely designate another entity to develop, own and operate the multifamily project, that project developer benefits from the use of tax credits since the equity provided is a subsidy that allows (and requires) the project to offer units at affordable rents.

58. What is the percentage of median income that will be used to determine rental costs for both affordable housing units and workforce units?

Answer: The affordable units be targeted to serve households with incomes at 60% of the area median income, and the rents established will correspond to the rents allowed for this income band. Workforce units are being modeled to target households with incomes at 80% of the area median income, and rents will be set accordingly. The tax credit program establishes households with incomes at or below 60% of the area median income as eligible for "affordable" housing, but the income range that is appropriate to establish eligibility for workforce housing is more fluid since it is not regulated (or subsidized) by any federal program. Depending on the public policy goal or purpose to be serve, workforce housing might serve households with incomes from 60%+ to 100% of the area

median income and beyond. Offering workforce housing is often used as a tool to recruit and retain public service employees during the early years of their tenure with local jurisdictions.

59. What will be the number of affordable housing units and the number of workforce housing units?

Answer: Until the project costs and financing commitments have been further refined, it is hard to say what the final unit mix will be. If a rental, the project will have to be modeled to make efficient use of low-income housing tax credits in order not to require a significant amount of City subsidy.

60. When the last new fire station was built, what was the population and anticipated growth?

Answer: *Not yet available.*

61. Who will own the property that the affordable housing will reside on and who will manage the property?

Answer: A number of options are possible. The project may be divided into separate condominium regimes with the City retaining ownership of the fire station base structure, and the City or its designee for the housing component, retaining ownership of a condo comprised of the residential facility and the related parking. Another structure might be to have the City own the entire development and provide a long-term lease to the entity that owns and operates the affordable housing project. Once the City has accepted the Developer's voluntary affordable housing contribution, the City will probably designate a mission-oriented organization, such as the Alexandria Housing Development Corporation (AHDC) to develop, own and operate the residential facility as affordable housing, in perpetuity.